# The AMERICAN SPECTATOR

A LITERARY NEWSPAPER

*EDITED BY* GEORGE JEAN NATHAN ★ ERNEST BOYD ★ SHERWOOD ANDERSON
JAMES BRANCH CABELL ★ EUGENE O'NEILL

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## WHY I DON'T WEAR EVENING DRESS

*by SEAN O'CASEY*

*Author, "The Plough and the Stars," "Within the Gates," "Juno and the Paycock," etc.*

IT IS strange that still today, when an uncertain "slip" is thought to be—in spite of measure-minded councillors and argus-eyed Vigilance Committees—enough to cover everything in thought and deed when splashing in the sea or tearing 'round the countryside, anyone should be found interested enough to turn aside for a second to spy out anything peculiar or unusual in things which others wear. And, as a rule, no one cares a tinker's damn about what others think to be suitable and convenient things to wear. It is only when some poor devil strays or is shoved in front of the public eye that the glassy public eye fixes him, and almost blinds itself examining, annotating, and analyzing everything he does, and every stitch he wears. So we find that Mr. Stanley Baldwin's pipe is much more famous than Mr. Baldwin himself. Mr. Baldwin may be getting smaller and smaller, but Mr. Baldwin's pipe is getting bigger and bigger. Any fool that sticks a big pipe into his mouth and leers a little will be told that he is Mr. Baldwin to the life. Since Mr. Baldwin is but one among millions of pipe smokers the attention paid to his particular pipe can't cause him very much annoyance. The pipe is a badge or a symbol, but nothing sensational can be wrapped 'round its use. So we can say that a legitimate and, sometimes, funny use is made of Mr. Baldwin's pipe as a symbol to provoke a smile. The pipe is a decent peg on which to hang a joke. It is a jolly addition to the man as it hangs from his lips.

There are still a few hotenhot camp-followers of the Press who find no satisfaction in such innocent symbols, and prefer to snap up something that can be moulded by words into a passing sensation for the stimulation of those who have time and poverty of mind enough to enjoy this sort of thing. I have suffered myself a little in this way. Many heated paragraphs have, from time to time, been published about my scorn, contempt, and hatred of evening dress, and only the other day a paragraph announced that I "still refused to dress like a waiter." This paragraph had a double implication: first, my contempt for anything approaching evening dress, and, secondly, my contempt for a waiter. So a sickening snobbery is tacked on to my alleged dislike of the suit and assemble that civilized men, the world over, have chosen to appear in when the sun goes down and the stars come out.

But the above is a mild thing compared to some of the statements made around the legend that to me the suit worn by millions of men in the evening is an abomination. It has been said that, having accepted an invitation, I came and astonished a cultured gathering by appearing in moleskin trousers held up by a thick and broad leather belt, and that I puffed thick fumes from a clay pipe into the faces of all who had the misfortune to be introduced to me. It has been said that at a luncheon party I shocked those who were gathered together by beating my fists on the table and calling for bacon and tumblers of whiskey. Now the fact is that I hate both whiskey and bacon, and of whiskey I have taken but about a tablespoonful in my life, and then only as a hasty and reachable remedy in illness. And no Irish worker when he goes on a visit wears his moleskin trousers, if he can possibly afford to buy more stylish ones. No Irishman, rich or poor, is an assassin of good manners, and has in him an innate charm and core of a courtly grace unexcelled by any other race. Anyone having the barbarous qualities attributed to me would be not only unfit to be asked anywhere, but would be hardly fit to live. It is strange that these journalistic hotenhot hangers-on should be able to turn a simple suit and jersey into fiery symbols of scorn for and hatred of everyone who chooses to dress himself differently.

Now evening-dress is no longer—if it ever has been—a symbol of a certain standard of life and birth. It no longer singles a man out as a member of one class or another. His Majesty the King, when he wears it, is indistinguishable from his humblest subject who may be wearing it too. It is, in my opinion, the most democratic dress worn by man today. Much more so than the dress worn by the proletarian soldier or sailor or policeman, and, certainly, much more democratic than the simple black shirt worn by the born in patriotism and conceived in wisdom members of the Fascist Order. It would be difficult today to pick on any man as a sterling example of acquired or inherited conservatism, for conservatism is beginning to move toward Communism, and even Lord Rothermere who climbed into a blackshirt and then found that he had to struggle out of a straitjacket, can hardly be looked upon as a symbol of sterling and dependable conservatism; but the most sterling example of conservatism now living, in moleskin trousers, would be a sterling conservative still, while Stalin in full evening-dress would remain an uncompromising Communist.

So we see that the non-wearing of evening-dress—except in sensational legend lore—has nothing whatever to do with proletarian pride or proletarian principle. There is no mystery about my reluc-

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tance to climb into the sombre shell of evening-dress. It is simply the stretching out for—to me—the easier handling and more comfortable feeling of a simple suit and jersey. These things are not worn to offend custom, or to evoke a flash of cheap sensationalism, or for any conceited wish to be different from everybody else; certainly not in a stupid spirit of scorn for those who prefer to be neat and trimly dressed. Rather have I an admiration for those who are able, with a small amount of care, to present themselves on all occasions clad decently, and pleasantly inconspicuous by their very neatness.

A neat, new, and happy-looking suit, such as workers wear during their days of rest and recreation, would, in a month or less, look on me like a haggard and work-worn assemble, and so a rough and easy way of dressing means the greatest possibility of neatness to me. To be as trim as possible, therefore, I choose the simple suit and the simple jersey.

My one criticism of evening-dress and of man's method of clothing himself in general, is purely æsthetic: his garments are invariably sombre, unoriginal in all points, commonplace, and colorless. Industrialism has clothed us all in customary suits of solemn black. There is more color and life in hell than there is in the modern English city. Women alone have saved our souls from utter and inner darkness. The English march as an army with bowler hats instead of banners. They are really terrified of color. The Gael, on the other hand, is in love with color. One of the reasons why the Gaelic League charmed a welcome from the Irish people for what it had to do was because the League brought with it the colors of kilts and shawls and banners. We must have bread first, but there is a lot to be said for a circus. Man's evening-dress is a symbol of penitence rather than of praise, and a state of penitence is dangerous to a people.

# THE PROFESSION OF ARMS

*by* ***KENNETH CAMPBELL***

*Editorial Staff, New York World-Telegram*

THE sight of Central Europe filled with armed and truculent men has confused the American burgher and filled him with pious reproach. He sees no sense in the marching of military bands, and is horrified when these bands clash and people the public places with corpses, as they did in Austria recently.

Although history has betrayed this peaceful man time and again, he sturdily insists upon confusing his standards of home, property and allegedly honest toil with the laws of the universe. There are many types of man that the burgher does not understand, but the type that he understands least is the man who enjoys being a soldier. He holds this man lower than he holds the artist, which is pretty low.

The American is correct in assuming that the military man is back of all the European gun-mindedness. In this country the military spirit is held to be an anomaly that had better be apologetic about itself. It ought to be regarded as an anomaly everywhere, the American argues.

Unfortunately it is not, never was, and probably never will be.

In Germany and Austria the military man, never very far submerged, has seized control in the hopeless confusion that has followed the great killing of 1914-1918. This confusion has been a stern reality throughout Europe. In America it was understood only through the works of a few literary fellows who wrote about "the lost generation". This school is now happily reported routed by the literary press agents for the pie-in-the-sky dreams of old Karl Marx.

The plain facts are that the military traditions of the Germanic peoples have just as much right to be regarded as civilization as the disorganized trough-scramblings of this and other countries. In this jammed and starving world they may well in time become the only possible civilization.

Although the Germanic idea of the Folk-State is the product of an aristocratic idea of military regimentation, the idea has taken possession of Germania's masses. Gentlemen like von Starhemberg and plebeians like Roehm joined in the hard, bright sword-for-the-Teuton culture that horrifies the American.

A tight and bitter strain of civilization runs through these gun-bohemians who respond to stimuli so utterly unknown in this country. They are raised in barracks and the cold blast of trumpets is in their blood. Their innards are tightened by great belts and their chins lifted by chin straps. If their blood is spiced with madness, it is an old madness. They mingle mysticism with the goose-step and a ferocious guard-room homosexuality that causes chins to drop and eyes to bulge in Kansas City. The burgher may not like these men now, but he will like them better when he must choose between them and the impending guinea-pig swarmings of Slavs and Asiatics.

These Teutonic soldiers are the purest distillation of the military profession and they differ from the practitioners of that calling in other countries as Albert Einstein differs from a high school algebra teacher.

The military man in democratic countries is a living negation of himself, because he is not permitted to work out a philosophy for his trade, which is to kill. He must explain his activities vaguely as "service to his country", although history should show him that such soldiers as Alexander and Marlborough never felt much regard for the state, but a great deal for their profession. Who believes that Bonaparte fought his battles for the good of the wine industry in France or that Charles XII of Sweden never embarked upon a campaign without counting its possible value to the Swedish merchants?

In England, the conception of the military life is linked somehow with the idea of smartness, ("The better sort of people y'knaow."). It is even more rootless in the United States. Colonel T. Bentley Mott, a graduate of West Point, states with the authority of experience that at the Military Academy an excessive interest on the part of a cadet in the more esoteric phases of his profession immediately arouses distrust and suspicion among his superiors. In this castless collection of postmasters' sons, anyone with the true warrior instinct is regarded as a dangerous lunatic.

In short, soldiers in democratic countries are forced to justify their existence by twirling a prayer-mill of ideas approved by members of the propertied class who think only of their property and families.

Ernst Roehm was contemplated with terror when he observed with incontrovertible logic that, since military men were called upon to die for national policies, they should shape those policies.

An overwhelming number of men throughout the world are ready to go out and die for almost any policy, or even for no policy, just so long as they think their leaders know their business and are running the show. In the World War they sulked, balked and began to consider themselves pacifists not because of their hardships, as is popularly supposed, but because it became apparent that grafters, incompetents and sutlers were in the saddle. Poincaré, touring the trenches in his ridiculous chauffeur uniform, did more to undermine the morale of the French than the Prussian shock troops. And if, on the German side, such leaders as Hoffman and Hermann Karl von Francois had been in control instead of such stuffed shirts as Hindenburg and such fools as Ludendorff and the Kaiser, the war would have continued apace until the lost generation became the dead generation.

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# BACK TO BABBITT

*by ERNEST BOYD*

IT has long been the custom for tried intellectuals to join or revert to the Catholic Church as a refuge from their own disillusionment. The case of Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn is more novel. Here we have a writer who was for many years in the radical forefront, but who now champions every orthodoxy, apparently in mortal terror of Communism and Hitlerism. "Commend me," he says, "to a grower of buckwheat and a breeder of sheep for knowledge near to the very sources of the cosmic process, for knowledge turned into visible power and wealth and beauty." So our old friend the farmer, that monument of culture and civilization, is the new ideal toward which Mr. Lewisohn invites us to aspire. In fact, so overcome was he by his emotions at a recent country fair that the very cattle gave him an inferiority complex. "There was a look in the eyes of a mountain sheep ram that somehow put me and my doings a little to shame."

The gist of the argument seems to be that whatever is ancient and primitive is necessarily better than what is modern. Where the world would be if it had not made some effort to progress beyond the pastoral stage which Mr. Lewisohn so nostalgically admires, he does not say. It seems rather excessive to allow oneself to be stampeded back to the Torah and the farm merely because Russia is a union of Soviet republics and Germany is suffering from the dire effects of a war neurosis. "I have read between two and three thousand volumes in my life and have traveled over half the earth and seen cities of men and strange continents and what do I know that in any ultimate sense is more or deeper knowledge concerning man and God than my remotest ancestor possessed?" Once upon a time I should have answered: a great deal. But, at the rate at which Mr. Lewisohn is proceeding upstream, it looks as if he were bent upon recovering the ancestral obscurantism.

His latest book, "The Permanent Horizon," betrays in its very title this nostalgia for escape. No intellectual or social horizon can be permanent, fortunately for mankind. The essence of this "new search for old truths," as he calls it, is that the bourgeoisie are the salt of the earth and that they should not let those wicked Communists and radicals frighten them out of their complacency. At a time when economic conditions are more than ever of paramount importance, Mr. Lewisohn dismisses economics as a subject of which he knows nothing and cares less. He even goes so far in this refusal to understand the import of economics by talking about "disinterested" property-owning men, as if private ownership could ever be disinterested. If he is so anxious to preserve America from the excesses of Nazism and Communism, he would do well to study more carefully the economic structure which alone makes the existence of a middle-class possible.

So far from condescending to such sordid details, Mr. Lewisohn prefers looking into sheeps' eyes and evolving a definition all his own of what a bourgeois is. To put it briefly, everyone who has ever enjoyed Mr. Lewisohn's approval is a bourgeois. Consequently, since Goethe and Shakespeare and Einstein are of the middle-class, the bourgeoisie is the finest flower of all civilization. Peaceful citizens who strive to make a little money, to give their children a good education, and cultivate their own gardens are the ideal which we are invited to contemplate. The theory seems to be that in this fashion we can guarantee a succession of distinguished men. During his long absence from America Mr. Lewisohn has evidently forgotten what Babbitt looks like and the kind of life he has created for himself and Main Street. The bourgeoisie has produced many more Babbitts than Goethes and there is nothing to indicate that it proposes to reverse the process. In fact, it is more likely that the pressure of economic circumstances will curtail the production of both.

When Mr. Lewisohn recently recommended the Pentateuch as a record of gentleness and loving kindness, I realized that, in his journey upstream, the wish was father to many of the thoughts which were beguiling him away from his former liberal and critical viewpoint. Hence, having decided to embrace the bourgeoisie, he must of necessity provide a definition of that class to suit his own illusions. Yet, in "The Permanent Horizon" itself, as soon as he begins to discuss realities, he shows us the middle-class mind as it is in practice rather than in Lewisohnian theory. "The gentlemen who sit around mahogany tables in Geneva and Lausanne and the other far more numerous gentlemen who populate the cabinets and parliaments of the world babble platitudes and make compromises and let the world slide farther and farther toward chaos because they are all by strictest analogy Edgar Wallaces and not John Miltons." In other words they are typical representatives and spokesmen of the bourgeoisie. The Babbitts of this world do not share Mr. Lewisohn's admiration for the "moral heroes and great poets," who have "followed their vision and damned the consequences."

The martyrs who have gone into the arena, even when afraid, rather than surrender their principles, have to wait a long time before middle-class minds decide that it is safe to admire such impractical eccentrics. "Our statesmen, our so-called leaders, don't even squint in the direction of the arena. They are not leaders at all; they are no more leaders than Bishop Manning is a moral hero, or an advertisement 'artist', Michelangelo, or Irving Berlin, Beethoven. They are conventional men beset by the superstitions and fallacies and fears of the herd."

But, Mr. Lewisohn, these are precisely the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie. Like yourself, they look askance at the "fearless sectaries who led the Russian Revolution," as befits what you amazingly call "disinterested, property-owning" men. When these people of the middle-class finally go into action, they are equipped with black or brown or blue or silver shirts, and prove themselves not "fearless sectaries" but the most cowardly and brutal bullies in modern history. The bourgeoisie likes its Oswald Mosleys better than its Miltons or its Bernard Shaws.

What Mr. Lewisohn understands by bourgeois leadership remains a mystery, to whose solution there is only one clue. I quote the dedication of his new book. "To Stephen S. Wise. Great Leader, Great Soul, Great Friend."

This is distinctly hard on Bishop Manning and Irving Berlin.

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# WHEN LADIES WRITE

*by GRACE ADAMS*

WHENEVER a male novelist, no matter how competent, manages to depict a woman, one cut above a congenital idiot, who is even vaguely recognizable as a human being, the critical fraternity goes into literary frenzies over his uncanny grasp of a commodity known as "feminine psychology." I certainly don't begrudge any male novelist the praise that is his due. But I am saving my own personal hosannas for the female novelist who can do as well.

It must be admitted that when American lady writers are content to squander their talents upon the lowly, stupid, inarticulate members of their sex they often produce singularly convincing portraits. Their bewildered little girls, their repressed, cat-loving spinsters and their confused, yearning, gin-befogged wives are not infrequently sincerely moving. But when these same lady novelists employ these same talents upon the upper stratum of their gender, when they write about modern, intelligent, sophisticated women, about the very kind of woman that they are themselves supposed to represent, they offer us the strangest, the most inhuman and the most unlovable specimens it has ever been my privilege to read about.

That "tawny-haired," "sun-bronzed," strangely self-reliant young creature, who strides so purposefully through the slick pages of American magazines dedicated to the "dramatization" of food and underwear, is certainly quite different from the gangling, floundering, gregarious adolescents with whom we have to put up in ordinary life. But she is a model of verisimilitude compared to that somewhat older but equally self-possessed lady that the feminine writers in their novels, their autobiographies, and in their serious articles about themselves, ask us to accept as the "intelligent modern woman."

This intelligent modern woman as she perfumes the literary atmosphere of New York and London and the artier sections of the great Southwest seems entirely devoid of love or doubt or pity or confusion or of any other quality that would identify her even remotely with the human race. She is always sure of what she wants from the world and equally sure of knowing just how to get it, always ready to meet and surmount any conceivable situation with a supposedly devastating wise-crack; always certain of her charm over all men; and always capable of so managing her love affairs, both legal and unlawful, that they in no way disturb the complacency of what, with exaggerated euphemism, we must call her soul. The few problems that threaten even momentarily to mess up her days are concerned not with husbands or children or lovers, but with hairdressers and gown-fitters.

Writers are, of course, the most arrogant and self-important race of people that have ever cluttered the earth—worse, even, than artists and actors. They are, that is, when you are forced to sit and listen to them talk about themselves. But a man, apparently, when he sits in silence before his typewriter, is able to put aside his silly acts of arrogance and look with honesty upon the torture and despair that is in his soul. And just as apparently the American woman isn't. What she finds upon self-inspection are not those passionate, doubt-torn qualities that make all human beings kin, but the phony picture she has manufactured of herself. For the female writer is so wonder-struck by her ability to hammer words into acceptable sentences, and sometimes to make her living with them, that she believes that this ability alone sets her above all the other members of her sex. That by some special magic it bestows upon her many other virtues that women have often longed for but never yet attained —mental poise and self-reliance and emotional independence. And so she sees herself not as the frowsy, simpering, none-too-attractive person that she too often appears to an impartial and unimpressed observer, but as a being apart, sure of herself and of her superiority to men.

It is, of course, only in the ego-stifled imagination of the lady writer in this country that such a person as she conceives herself to be could possibly exist. The equality, the education and the "freedom" that the older feminists fought for so fanatically has supposedly conferred many boons upon the woman of today. But among them cannot be counted any cessation of the turmoil of her spirit. No matter how many jobs she holds, dollars she earns, cocktails she guzzles, dirty stories she snickers over, or different beds she sleeps in, the modern woman is never quite the untrammeled creature that she often imagines herself. Emotionally and mentally she is just as dependent upon some man or another as ever her grandmothers were. Her intelligence, her education and her ability to earn her own living may make this dependence less obvious, but they make it no less real.

Every sensible woman, who is also honest, knows this fact as well as men do. And until the feminine writer knows it, too, and is willing to acknowledge it on paper, her picture of the "intelligent modern woman" will continue to be distorted by that unholy ideal that she has constructed of herself.

# A LAYMAN'S NOTES FOR AMERICAN RECOVERY

*by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN*

1. Emulate the pronunciamento of Mussolini and remove women from all fields of labor, save in such cases as they are the heads of families and have persons dependent upon them for support, thus clearing the way for unemployed males.

2. Emulate the pronunciamento of Hitler and get rid of women in politics, where they have done more harm than good. Send them back into the home, where they belong.

3. Endorse, immediately and fully, birth control.

4. Abrogate all personal income taxes on incomes under $8,000 for married men and $6,000 for single men, and double the present taxes on incomes over those amounts up to $30,000. Take one-third of all amounts from $30,000 to $50,000; one-half of all from $50,000 to $100,000; and sixty-five per cent of all over $100,000.

5. Get rid of the New Deal instanter, admitting freely, frankly and ingratiatingly that it has been a failure.

6. Form civilian army corps of the unemployed as branches of the regular army; put them under army regulations; house, feed and pay them as in the case of the regular army. (And pay no heed to the peace and anti-preparedness howlers.)

7. Tax all luxuries to the limit.

8. Forbid the further purchase of any foreign bonds, governmental or otherwise, by Americans.

9. Double all corporation taxes.

10. Throw open all amusement places to the public, free of charge, one day a week.

## SERVANTS OF GOD: No. 29

*United Press Dispatch:*

Moulton, Ala.—The Rev. L. P. Royer, Baptist minister convicted on murder charges in the ambush slaying of Frank Pickens, aged deacon, today was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The State charged Royer killed Pickens as reprisal for the deacon's efforts to oust him from his pulpit on a misconduct charge.

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# A CLARA PHILLIPS FOR A MRS. ANTONIO

*by ANTHONY M. TURANO*

*Member of the Nevada Bar*

A FEW weeks ago, the State of New York, after the usual legal formalities and religious solemnities, and with as little physical pain as possible, sent one of its citizens, the mother of two children, in search of her Maker. Some days later, the equally serene State of California, with no less deliberation and legality, ordered the authorities of San Quentin Prison to restore another woman to the status of a free citizen among us, after a confinement of twelve years.

The first was Anna Antonio, who had been found guilty of helping to murder her husband. The second, Clara Phillips, had killed her neighbor, Mrs. Meadows, by hacking her brutally with an axe. Although their social performances were essentially the same, the two ladies were obviously made to travel in diametrically opposite directions. The average layman may wonder about the broad principle of social justice that would reconcile this dissimilarity in passports. What with the numerous gangsters and their molls, it appears that the substitution of one tragic actress for another was hardly necessary for the purpose of maintaining a balance in the occupations. Neither can it be shown that there is any serious difference between the laws of California and those of New York. The two States are equally circumspect in discouraging and punishing murder. In fact, the only explanation of the contradictory methods of dealing with identical problems is the haphazard manner in which those laws are administered.

Under the earlier criminology, punishment was regarded as the only remedy for every offense. The penal codes were like so many pharmacopœias wherein were set forth the number of grains required to expiate each infraction. When the prescribed medicine had been fully taken, society was no longer concerned with the patient, until he was brought back to the judicial dispensary for further homeopathic doctoring. Among the legal innovations of recent years were the introduction of the intermediate sentence, and the creation of boards of pardons and paroles. The system prevails in most States, including New York and California, and involves the modern assumption that, since crimes are committed by human beings, all persons found guilty of the same offense are not to the same degree dangerous to social peace; and that by sentencing them for indefinite periods their releases can be made to depend upon their readiness to become law-abiding neighbors.

But however sound the principle may be in the abstract, its logical implications have been consistently forgotten in practice. Aside from the vocational training incidentally provided by the larger penal institutions, punishment is still the only method whereby it is attempted to cure psychopathics, rehabilitate defectives, or re-educate social unadjustables. So the parole system amounts to nothing more than the splitting of the original doses of the same old medicine into grams and minims, and taking chances on the results. In some capital cases, the law utterly ignores the entire idea of the corrigibility of criminals, and resorts to such infallible potions as the scaffold and the lethal chair. Hence the dissimilar fates of Clara Phillips and Anna Antonio.

It must be admitted that, between the two women, there was small choice of a peaceful partner in a game of bridge. Yet there were a few humanities in favor of Mrs. Antonio. Of course, she was found guilty of doing away with her husband for the purpose of collecting his insurance. Life was precious to him, although his contribution to social well-being consisted of drug-peddling. But it could be plausibly argued that his demise was somewhat less lamentable than the passing of Beethoven. Another element in mitigation of Anna's crime was the social factor of her extreme poverty. A penal system concerned with individuals ought to consider a relativity of temptations. The killing of a dope vendor for $500 is less likely to occur, for instance, to nine-year-old Lucy Cotton Thomas, whose unearned monthly income is $5,000.

Then there was the question of Anna's children, whose little dresses she was still sewing when the executioner summoned her to the electric chair. Even according to strict Mosaic Law, it can be contended that depriving two small tots of their mother is a sort of cruel and unusual punishment which the innocent ones had done nothing to deserve.

But the main point is that the law, regardless of the parole system, exacted a life for a life, without considering the question whether the victim could ever resume the business of mothering her offspring.

The release of Mrs. Phillips is doubtless based on the belief that she has been sufficiently punished. And it may be conceded that if imprisonment alone is enough to earn an offender the privilege of resuming her place in society, she would have no greater right to freedom twenty years hence. But aside from the fact that she has lived in legal seclusion for twelve years, we are given no assurance that the lady is a better social asset than she was before her crime. Her defence to the murder charge was that she had Indian blood in her veins, and that she yielded to an irresistible racial impulse in swinging a destructive axe, in the same manner that her progenitors had wielded tomahawks.

Such an excuse may be a debatable point in anthropology, but there is no doubt that the woman was a dangerous neighbor, too prone to lose her temper with murderous results. Yet in ordering her release, the authorities made no medical inquiries into her present emotional reactions or the likelihood of her becoming again atavistic or tomahawk-minded. Nor does it appear that her lamentable Indian blood was submitted to any sort of extravasation for the purpose of increasing the peace-loving corpuscles in her circulation. We are requested to believe that her penitentiary experience, in some miraculous way, gave her a reliable nervous system.

For all I know, she may be both penitent and harmless, probably to the same degree as was Mrs. Antonio when she kissed her babies for the last time. Perhaps another tamed convict is Edmund "Spud" Murphy, whose release has been ordered in California, after serving fourteen years for a criminal attack on two young girls; although his crime was so shocking to the population that three other members of the Howard Street Gang were lynched.

The cases mentioned are merely typical of thousands of others. From the viewpoint of simple humanity, it can be plausibly contended that ten or fourteen years of penal confinement ought to be enough to satisfy the loudest clamors for legal vendetta. But it does not follow that the hit or miss restoration of convicts to free society tends to increase the sense of personal safety on the part of the law-abiding population. It is not reasonable to expect that imprisonment will cure the many forms of emotional inadequacy and social maladjustment that manifest themselves through such symptoms as alcoholism, drug addiction, and the general shirking of personal responsibility. Nor is it likely that a few years in a jute mill can induce in confirmed knaves a willingness to undertake, in lawful fashion, the increasingly difficult economic struggle.

Hence it is to be expected that a good portion of the convicts

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periodically released as corrected turn out to have been simply punished. They return to the warden time after time with the infallible regularity of homing pigeons, as soon as they have entertained the social order with their latest capers.

Certain studies of recidivism were recently made by Joseph Fulling Fishman and Vee Terrys Perlman. It was found that out of the 19,000 trivial offenders admitted into the penal institutions of a certain community in one year, more than fifty per cent had served two or more terms. 452 had been jailed five times; 324 had six sentences to their credit; 257 had seven, and so on, ending with six who had made twenty-five successive expiations. Two of them had been out and in thirty-four times, and undoubtedly intended to do even better before they were overtaken by death or old age. It is well known that the majority of the kidnappers recently dealt with by the law were persons with remarkable prison histories. A scientific system of penology would have kept them all safely and humanely institutionalized the rest of their lives, not so much for the purpose of punishing them as for the protection of themselves and the social order.

It should be evident that until our boards of parole begin seriously to inquire medically and psychologically into the emotional identity of their released charges; until they cease to regard simple imprisonment as being sufficient to render an anti-social being a desirable neighbor, the various official jugglings of ins and outs will serve no other purpose than to supply us with such pieces of sardonic humor as giving us a Clara Phillips for a Mrs. Antonio, a "Spud" Murphy for a Verne Sankey.

# HOLLYWOOD AGENT

*by CARL DREHER*

MONTAGUE SONKIN—Moe Sonkin, June '15 in the *C.C.N.Y. Alumni Register,* and Monte to his innumerable pals in the picture business—neither acts, dances, sings, writes, nor directs, but he is quite as important to Hollywood as if he did all of these things *par excellence.* He is handsome enough to be an actor, as a matter of fact, and his features are quite Nordic under casual inspection. People tell him he looks like John Barrymore. One of the few mistakes Monte made in his theatrical career was remarking on this resemblance to Barrymore himself, the first time they met, between scenes, on a sound stage. "It's quite possible," was the well-known retort of Barrymore, scrutinizing him, "my father traveled a great deal." Monte was speechless for a moment; then he laughed loudly with the others. He did not think of a suitable rejoinder until five minutes later, when Barrymore was back on the set.

Usually Monte is at no loss for a snappy answer. A successful flesh peddler has to think and talk fast, at least while he is on the rise. He always has to be a step ahead of the other fellow. Now that Monte has arrived, he doesn't have to follow the ball so closely. Now the producers come to him, supplicating the thoroughbreds in his stable. He manages half of the biggest box-office names in the business, and it is hard to plan a first-line production without one or several of them. Monte collects ten per cent of all they earn, and his income tax makes him one of the pillars of the New Deal, although hardly a voluntary mainstay. The government has to plaster a lien on him each year to collect the last quarter. Naturally Monte is a rugged individualist, as who wouldn't be with an emolument of three hundred thousand a year all through the depression?

Not that Monte isn't generous with cash when there is a legitimate call for it. He supports his parents, who still live in the old flat on Rivington Street, in New York. They visited the Coast once, but didn't mix well at the little Beverly Hills parties Monte throws periodically for a few hundred intimate friends. Recently Monte gave fifteen hundred dollars to a fund for the relief of the German Jews, the same as the major producers sitting around the speakers' table at a money-raising luncheon. A thousand would have been plenty, he reflected—the stories they told were surely exaggerated—but he wasn't going to be outdone by the producers' clique. Anyhow, on getting back to the office, he charged it to the firm, Sonkin & Slattery, Inc., as a legitimate business expense. His partner Slattery had not been invited to the luncheon.

Monte came up in the world by religiously focusing his attention on the main chance. He forgot the erudition to which the City College professors had exposed him in Philosophy 4 and Mathematics 3 as soon as he shed his hired cap and gown. If he had remembered it, he would be a school teacher now. As business manager of a small independent studio, he learned how to squeeze two cents out of every dime spent in production, and to keep at least one of the two cents for himself.

Later he applied the same principle in a major studio job. Finding Superb Pictures, whose studio he was operating at the time, expending about thirty thousand a year for miscellaneous automobile and truck hire, Monte made a deal with an auto livery to supply all these conveyances for a year, and, off the record, to pay him ten per cent for the privilege. When the boss found out about it, Monte argued that the company had lost nothing, had gained, in fact, because the drivers now wore caps prominently lettered "Superb Productions." But Monte's best defence was that in the meantime he had married the boss' daughter. Hollywood hasn't found the answer to that one yet.

Another important factor in Monte's success was his practice of automatically assuming that other people's motives were as low as his own, and so guessing right almost invariably in forecasting their actions. He never took a serious step without consulting the best lawyers obtainable, and seeing to it that his attorneys were better than his clients' or the producers'. They cost him a lot, but he figured it cheap insurance. Moreover, Monte had the knack of timing his moves. In the matter of calling a client off a production and sending him to Agua Caliente while the producer made up his mind to raise the actor's salary, Monte always executed the maneuver at the point where the studio couldn't shoot around the absentee, or quit entirely, without losing more than the amount in controversy. To obviate uncertainty in such matters, he maintained a private payroll of studio employees who reported to him daily on what was what at their respective lots. And, if he was caught occasionally, he always had more material with which to blackmail the other fellow than the latter could find in his files.

In the last few years Monte has been able to keep up his yacht, a Hispano-Suiza and a Lincoln, a twenty-room Colonial house in Beverly Hills, and a twelve-room desert bungalow at Palm Springs, without such extreme measures. Monte is just as well satisfied, because the late hours, the obligatory conviviality, and the unremitting excitement of his profession have not done his heart any good. At forty he would rather leave the more clamorous dog-fights to his younger associates and concentrate on his golf.

Monte esteems himself a friend of the actor. He points with pride to the luminaries whom he has hoisted into the big money from beggarly jobs with the Theatre Guild, or in Europe, or in other places unwarmed by the Hollywood sun. Some of them he supported personally while they were getting a start, taking a first mortgage on them, of course, so that very few got away to rival agents, whom he considers a bunch of double-crossing rats anyway.

The movie business hasn't always been kind to Monte. There was the case of Sari Dillon, *née* Sadie Diffenstein, a 1926 beauty contest winner, and so naïve that Monte had to procure an abortion for her three months after her arrival in Hollywood, while she was playing a vestal virgin in her first picture. Her rise was meteoric; soon she was a star, and procuring her own abortions. Sonkin & Slattery, however, continued to manage her other routine business, supervise her investments, and handle the publicity for her elope-

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ments and divorces. (All Monte's clients fly to Yuma to get married and divorce in Los Angeles.) Sari Dillon, at a hundred thousand a picture, represented a substantial income to her agents, until the relationship was abruptly terminated by an unfortunate occurrence.

Monte was driving Miss Dillon home from the Ambassador late one night, both their chauffeurs having got drunk while waiting for the party to end. In some way the car ran into the curb on Wilshire Boulevard and knocked over a stop signal. A motorcycle cop came along immediately. Miss Dillon had bumped her nose against the windshield and was crying. Although she was unacquainted with the patrolman, she called him a son-of-a-bitch. The cop frowned and demanded Monte's license.

"Do you know who I am?" asked Monte, who had had a few drinks himself, naturally.

"No," replied the officer, turning the beam of his flashlight on Monte's face.

"I'm Montague Sonkin."

"I still don't know you," declared the cop.

One word led to another, until Monte, who, aside from his heart, considers himself to be in prime physical condition—he gets a thorough rub-down in his sumptuous office every afternoon—made a pass at the cop, who countered with a short right uppercut, forgetting to shift the flashlight to his left hand before so doing. Monte went down and out, although he maintained subsequently that if his heart hadn't gone back on him he would have knocked the cop's block off. Be that as it may, when he came to, Monte managed to avoid further complications by showing his deputy sheriff's badge, and he thought so little of the incident that the very next day he broke eighty at Hillcrest.

But during the week it was discovered that Miss Dillon's nose, which before the accident had presented a most aphrodisaical retroussé outline, was now bent down instead of up. It was only bent a little, and the rest of her was just as good as before, but for a hundred grand a girl has to be good all over, and Miss Dillon wasn't ready for character rôles yet. Her attorneys conferred with Monte's attorneys, and Monte's lawyers were still better than their opponents, but they couldn't talk away Miss Dillon's nose. The conferences got nowhere, and eventually Miss Dillon brought suit against Monte for five million and twenty-three thousand dollars, the small change being for doctors' bills.

Ultimately the matter was compromised for a matter of two hundred thousand, but Monte's golf was bad all this Spring, and he needs a full measure of unflagging optimism, and a little cheating, to break ninety now. With all the salary cuts he can impose on the underlings in his organization, it will take a long time to make up two hundred thousand smackers. What grieved him most was having to cut his parents' allowance from two hundred to a hundred and fifty dollars a month. But, as he wrote them, a hundred and fifty is still a lot of money in a depression.

# THE FETICH OF HISTORY

*by JULIUS W. FRIEND*

ARCHÆOLOGISTS report that excavations have now been completed in Ur of the Chaldees, the legendary birthplace of Abraham. So many cities have been unearthed in the last forty years—Babylon, Assur, Nineveh, Knossos, Pergamum and a hundred others—that the question inevitably presents itself as to why no attempt was made in former times to uncover these ruins. Why should there have developed suddenly in the late nineteeth century this extensive research into old buried cities? It is not due to renewed interest in antiquity. The fame of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and Greece at no time faded from men's memories. The tale of Troy held a fascination for the Greeks and the Romans hard to overestimate, yet neither Alexander the Great with his extravagant enthusiasm for the Homeric heroes, nor the Romans, who believed that the Trojan Aeneas was the founder of Latium, used their unlimited resources to undertake the excavation of the actual site of Troy. It was left to accumulate centuries of dust undisturbed until a German-American business man, Schliemann, delved into its nine cities in 1870. If we omit from inquiry the Middle Ages as having no concern or resources to waste on pagan abominations, we shall have to pause at the Renaissance long enough to wonder why the renewal of interest in classical art and letters did not take the form of digging up relic cities.

We cannot lay this neglect of ruins to ignorance of actual sites. Alexander made a special trip to the plain of Troy; Xenophon leading his mercenaries back from Mesopotamia noted that they marched past the ruins of Nineveh, that great city of the Assyrians. In 116 A. D. the Emperor Trajan visited the ruins of Babylon where 443 years before Alexander the Great had died. He reported that "he saw nothing worthy of such fame, but only heaps of rubbish, stones and ruins."

The answer to our modern zeal for archæological activities lies neither in renewed interest nor in suddenly discovered information, but rather in the development of a new attitude toward the past. The end of the eighteenth century and the whole of the nineteenth saw the rise of a new conception—the historical. History of a sort has always been written wherever men could write, but prior to modern times it has been a chronicle of rulers and conquests attempting to glorify a reigning house or state, and not a research into the past. To make a sweeping generalization, before the eighteenth century the historical conception did not exist. Briefly, the historical conception asserts that any human institution is sufficiently explained when its origin and subsequent development, its career is traced. It supposes that, mysteriously enough, something is learned by the mere factual examination of civilization at different periods of time. In short it is interested in "evolution," whatever that may mean when thus applied to human culture.

The excavation of the ruins of old cultures does not entail approval or disapproval of their ways of living or even of their art. We do not wish to learn from Persepolis or from Khatti or from Delphi anything which might help in criticism of present day art, religion, or social organization; we want only to picture what these civilizations were so that we can piece together the broken threads up to the present. The modern historical emphasis is on history itself and not on the values manifest in history. We look to history not to learn by example, whether good or horrible, that which can help us to be what we ought to be; we are only interested in the "evolution."

This emphasis on history for its own sake cannot be explained by calling it the scientific attitude. The sciences worthy of serious consideration are just those which have become most free of history or the temporal sequence. Mathematics, physics, chemistry, etc., attempt to find universal laws which operate at any time and at any place. Contrary to popular opinion, the scientific concept of cause and effect has nothing to do with the time sequence. The man who falls and breaks his arm on the slippery pavement may say that the weather was the cause of his injury. But, of course, it is nothing of the sort; it is the occasion, and his arm would break whenever and wherever it was met with a certain force. To mistake occasions for causes, or time for positive factors is to commit the fallacy of historism so potent in supporting the prevailing irrationalism of today.

That orgiastic thinker, Spengler, is a perfect example of this sort of abandonment of the intellect. Returning to the old cyclical theory of history, Spengler would have us believe that some mysterious destiny causes these cycles and that civilizations pass through an inevitable curve of growth, with a youth, an old age, or a spring, summer, autumn, etc. With all due respect, this is high-

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toned flummery. Every event takes time to occur, but to introduce time or destiny as its explanation is merely to say that it happened because it happened. For example, time does not age beer, enzymes perform the operation; the "ageing" can be retarded or accelerated. Men do not die of "old age;" in the course of time certain chemical changes occur which prevent the proper functioning of the organism. When these changes are present at the age of thirty, a man is "old;" if they are absent at ninety he is not "old."

Granted that history and everything else for that matter moves in cycles, the cycles are understandable only by finding causal factors. Actuary tables have proved reliable enough to bank on, but they do not make men wither and die. Moreover their reliability depends upon the continued stability of conditions on which they are based. For a program to succeed it must take account of existing conditions, and whether this same program succeeded a hundred times in the past, failed a hundred times in the past, or was never tried at all, makes no difference whatever. The argument by history has no logical merit. It is so much verbal fluff.

Even more treacherous and productive of confusion is the allied practice of drawing judgments from history. Origins do not affect values. Aristotle puts the matter into beautifully clear and simple words: "What is white for many days is no whiter than that which is white for a single day." Nothing is assessible in terms of its history. The sculpture of Phidias is beautiful irrespective of its position in the history of Greek art. The dramas of Sophocles are great tragedies only because they deal in ageless aspects of human nature. Aristotle's analysis of reason is correct or incorrect regardless of the fact that the Hellenic world of his time was disintegrating. Grant that Marx's interpretation of the development of the social and economic order is historically true, this fact yet lays no necessity on the future since the future may and most probably will include all sorts of factors unknown and thus unaccounted for. Hitler's nonsense about returning to the Utopia of the German forest is only slightly more ludicrous than T. S. Eliot's plea for royalism and Anglo-Catholicism. Neither is based on rational argument; both appeal to history.

The importance of a knowledge of history is not denied because of the fact that by itself history proves nothing. Like personal experience, history teaches that many of our conceptions are too narrowly formed; it corrects the provincialism of theories. But it will yield no ideas not brought to it for confirmation. Everyone knows that person of wide experience and conscientious travel who remains the merest yokel. He brings no insight to what he looks at; all things remain for him isolated, unintelligible facts.

As with personal experience, so with history—it is a laboratory. But as the great Poincaré pointed out: "To wish to experiment without preconceived ideas is to render all experiment sterile." Until we can envisage history in the light of particular occasions caused by universal rational factors and to be evaluated in terms of dateless values, we shall not only never arrive at a scientific understanding of it, but it will continue to constitute a fertile source of confusion and error. If we cannot perceive in the past anything "worthy of fame": examples of truth and falsity, of good and evil, of beauty and ugliness, values in themselves independent of their particular occurrences and not subject to time or place, then we had better say of all history what Trajan said of Babylon—it is "only heaps of rubbish, stones and ruins."

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# THE PRODIGAL FATHER

***by E. PETROFF***

*From the Russian, by A. Fox*

IVAN IVANOVICH bade farewell to his immigrant friends abroad and went back to Soviet Russia, to Moscow.

He thought: "I suppose my wife has forgotten me. It is seven years already since we have seen each other . . ."

Then followed what usually happens in melodramatic films. His wife cried. His mother-in-law cried. His grandmother cried.

At the most intense moment of this touching family scene, a very small and very serious youngster came in. He wore short trousers and a red necktie.

"Who is this child?" asked Ivan Ivanovich.

"Heavens, how forgetful I am," cried his wife. "I forgot the most important thing. This is your son. Yes, yes, your son. He was born shortly after you left. He is seven years old."

The startled Ivan Ivanovich said, "Hm," and sat down on the first chair available.

The little man sighed, looked at the excited family with his blue eyes, and inquired in a bass voice:

"Is this the same father who ran away with the White Army?"

"The same," confessed the grandmother, as the braver of the family.

"Hm . . . So . . . Well," sighed the little man. "'Let's get acquainted."

An unpleasant pause ensued.

"And . . . What is your name, little one?" asked Ivan Ivanovich, trying to give his voice as much fatherly warmth as he could.

"I am called Marat," answered the child, with dignity. "And what is yours?"

"Ivan Ivanovich. Do you go to school?"

"Yes, and besides I am a pioneer."

Ivan Ivanovich did not know the meaning of pioneer, but he felt that it was better not to ask. Another heavy pause. "'I am a grown up person and can't find a suitable subject for conversation with a seven-year-old urchin. I'll tell him a fairy tale.

"Marat, hm. . . . Do you want me to tell you a fairy tale?"

"Fairy tale?" wondered Marat. "What is that?"

"A fairy tale? It is . . . hm . . . a kind of story."

"Well, all right, tell it to me," answered Marat, patronizingly. "Only hurry, because at six I have a class in agricultural chemistry."

Ivan Ivanovich coughed and began:

"Once upon a time there was a red hat . . ."

"I know," interrupted Marat. "We have red hats on every corner, holding red sticks in their hands. . . Tell me something else . . ."

"If that is the case, I'll tell you about hobgoblins. . . . But it is rather terrifying."

"Terrifying?" asked Marat. "What's terrifying about hobgoblins? Every Home Committee is full of them. And, furthermore, Home Construction does not interest me at the present moment . . ."

Ivan Ivanovich became thoughtful.

"I'll tell you about the flying carpet. Do you want to listen?"

"Oh, all right. But I am already fairly well acquainted with that branch of activity. Only yesterday I delivered a talk to my classmates on aviation. . . . Do you know what? Tell me about the English Trade Unions. It must be very interesting!"

"What? Hm. . . . Trade Unions? . . . What is that? Listen, I'll tell you a story tomorrow."

"Very well. I have to leave now. I am afraid I'll be late. I am a member of the On Time League."

And the personage in the red tie made his exit.

* * *

Within one month, Ivan Ivanovich obtained a visa and returned abroad.

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# BOYD DIGESTS THE BOOKS

FORTY-TWO Years in the White House." (*Irwin Hood (Ike) Hoover*). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. $3.50—The chief usher at the White House does more to shatter the prestige of its occupants than any Marxist. Particularly dreadful are the pictures of Harding, Coolidge and Hoover. Imagine a man, to wit, Coolidge, who could eat his breakfast while having his hair cut.

"Not I, But the Wind." (*Frieda Lawrence*). New York: The Viking Press. $2.75—Not as diverting as the other ladies' books about Lorenzo. Mrs. Lawrence firmly takes her stand as a legitimate wife, but is mercifully silent as to her rivals. She has nothing to say of any interest concerning her husband and his friends, and the best she can do is to print a great number of letters from Lawrence to his mother-in-law. Unusual, as usual, Lawrence seems to have regarded his mother-in-law as a great pal and he wrote to her in the manner of a dutiful schoolboy writing home.

"The Passing Chapter." (*Shane Leslie*). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $2.00—A running commentary on changing English conditions since the war. Mr. Leslie has an uncanny taste for pointless witticisms, and the entire book conveys the impression of a would-be sparkling conversation that is completely flat.

"The Quest for Corvo." (*A. J. A. Symons.*) New York: The Macmillan Company. $2.50—That over-rated writer who styled himself Baron Corvo was one of the most unpleasant creatures that ever cluttered up the literary scene. Here he has become the theme of a fascinating biography which has all the fun of a good mystery story. Mr. Symons engaged in an exciting quest when he set out to clear up the mystery of Corvo's life and he has communicated the excitement to his readers. It is quite unnecessary to be interested in Corvo's dreary books in order to enjoy this story.

"Our Changing Order." (*Thorstein Veblen.*) New York: The Viking Press. $3.00—These posthumous papers by the incorrigible Veblen once again demonstrate his incredible capacity for stating nothing in the most tortuous language. The prize of this collection is the theory as to why women dress as they do, which succeeds in omitting entirely the element of sexual ornament and attraction. The inclusion of a very early essay from the author's college days proves that he could not write plain English even then.

"The Challenge to Liberty." (*Herbert Hoover.*) New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. $1.75—Timed to meet the exigencies of electioneering, this volume of Mark Sullivan-esque platitudes about rugged individualism should be worth a million votes for the Democratic party. Mr. Hoover is as evasive and as ineffectual a critic as he was a President.

"These Hurrying Years." (*Gerald Heard.*) New York: The Oxford Press. $3.00—Surveying world events from the British point of view since 1900, this book is a lively commentary marred by a few positive misstatements. Those of us whose lives have lain chiefly in that period are entitled to regret that we did not get a fair share of the nineteenth century, since the twentieth, seen in his retrospect, is simply the record of a continuous series of imbecilities appropriately culminating in the World War and the preposterous peace which is still raging.

"Without Gloves." (*Frank R. Kent.*) New York: William Morrow. $2.50—These reprinted articles by one of the leading anti-Brain Trust journalists are supposed to be a deadly, unbiased exposé of the New Deal. In reality, they are the usual drip of party politics, the kind of thing that makes most Washington correspondents unreadable. What the practical alternatives to the present administration's efforts are never transpires, unless they are to revert to the very people and tactics which have landed us in the present mess.

"Fascist Germany Explains." (*Celia Strachey and John Gustav Werner*). New York: Covici, Friede. $1.25—Well chosen extracts from the speeches of Nazi leaders and from the Nazi press illustrating the idiocies and endless contradictions of Nazi policy. A striking proof of the *Führer's* contention that the adherence of the German masses can only be secured by systematically misleading them.


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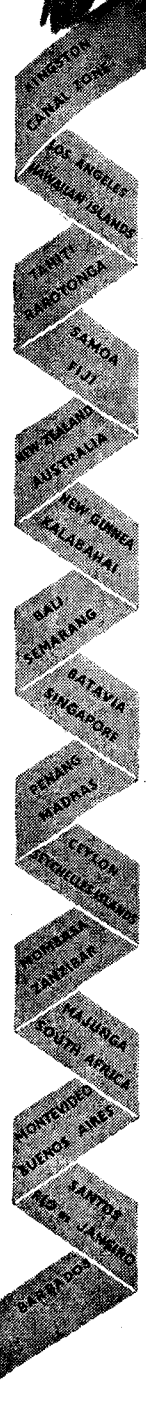


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# FEMALE RED

*by H. ALTSHULER*

SHE was, she informed us, from down South. She was small and blonde and cuddly. She had a little black dot under the corner of her left eye that could not have been soot because sometime during the evening it fell off and she hurried around looking for it, to stick it back. The eyes themselves were blue, and she had raspberry (artificial color and flavor added) lips.

She was so glad to be visiting us way up here! Honestly, we couldn't imagine what a thrill it was to her to be among young people who really took the Party work seriously and tried to do something. Down South, they were so lazy about it. They always hurried the speakers, so they could get the meetings through and get on to the dancing. That's all they cared about, honestly! They wouldn't read the Party literature; they got tired and sneaked off after an hour or so when they helped out with picketing; they never worried about making converts, or paying dues, or anything, the way we did up here.

She paused a moment, puffed quickly, and choked her cigarette. She leaned back again, resting her head on the shoulder of the young proletarian writer on her left. His arm came up, around her shoulder, and she snuggled closer.

The monologue resumed. She was delighted, the way we did things! Back home it made her sick to see them carry on. Once when they got a good-looking speaker from New York, not one of the girls at the meeting heard a word he said, because they were all trying to figure out ways of getting the most dances with him afterwards. And therefore all the men who had been there were sore at him, and hardly spoke to him, and what kind of report would he give when he got back to New York! It didn't do the girls a single bit of good, though, because she had most of the dances with him herself. She didn't know why. She supposed he just took a fancy to her, because she hadn't done a thing—! But you knew what most of those girls in the Party looked like, anyhow. They just came in because—they weren't interested in the work, all they wanted to do was dance and have a good time. And the boys! They were even worse. It was so good to be among people with whom the work came first!

She stopped, because somehow during the last few sentences she had become tangled up with the proletarian novelist, so that his lips were above hers, and very close. It was half dark there, and a tricky Beethoven rondeau was coming from the piano in the other room. The music, in a crescendo at that moment, covered whatever slight sound there may have been. She patted him and murmured "Silly!"

The proletarian novelist (he was a weak-eyed lad with a small fuzzy mustache) appeared rather surprised with it all. He didn't know quite what to do, so he merely held on tight. That seemed to satisfy her.

She resumed. The men up here knew what they were doing! If they had talent—if they could paint or speak or write—they devoted their talent to the Party. How wonderful, how superior they seemed! Down South, the boys only thought about one thing. They wanted to dance straight through the meeting, and then pick out some pretty girl and take her home and neck. It was so hard for a self-respecting girl to belong to the Party. We couldn't know the things she had to put up with, when all she wanted was to work and help other people to work.

She leaned hard against the proletarian writer (his knees were trembling by now) and he fell back on the couch, still holding her. It appeared that he was dragging her down beside him. She let herself be dragged, clutching at him with ineffectual and quite pretty dismay.

She piped up again, a little later, when their positions had been more or less straightened out and we could almost tell which was which. What they needed down South was an up-and-coming group of young people like ourselves, young people who could put aside their personal interests and go out and get things done—who could put heart and soul into spreading knowledge of the Party and making people understand.

We were beginning, mercifully, to drift back into the other room, leaving them alone. The last one out snapped the light button from "on" to "off."

For a little while her voice still drifted out to us. Then it ceased. . . .

# THEATRICALIA

*by GEORGE JEAN NATHAN*

The present theatrical season will doubtless again bring with it the venerable critical ventilation as to the invariable superiority of the writing in the majority of English plays to that in the majority of American. It is entirely true that there was a day, and not so long ago, when the writing in the average English product was very considerably superior to that in its local equivalent, but that day is past. (Let it be remembered that we are speaking of the *average* play.) At the present time, England coughs up just as large a proportion of bad stage writing as we do. And often an even larger. Make a few comparisons, for example, from last season's record. Was the writing in Ivor Novello's "Party" any better, or even so good, as that in, say, that no more meritorious exhibit, "The Blue Widow"? Was the writing revealed in "Ten Minute Alibi" any better, or even so good, as that in the American-made mystery dingus called "Invitation to a Murder"? Compare the writing in "Eight Bells" to that in the American drip called "Heat Lightning," in "Strange Orchestra" to that in "The Perfumed Lady," in "Come of Age" to that in "Oliver Oliver," in "Come What May" to "Jig Saw," in "These Two" even to "The Wooden Slipper." Was "John Brown's" ("Gallows Glorious") writing in any way superior to that in any dozen average local products, deserved failures as well?

The new season will also assuredly contact us, as the high-toned trade phrase is, with the questionable critical habit of declaring an actress a great genius on the score of a single reviewed performance. Miss Elisabeth Bergner, who is to play here for the first time this season, will be the actress in point and the fact that she is, in truth, an actress of very uncommon talent will not make the aforesaid habit any the less questionable. This habit, as native to England as to America—the English critics hailed Miss Bergner as one of the greatest living actresses after seeing her in only one play—reduces criticism to a level of journalistic sensationalism. In the case of an actress of restricted range as, for example, Yvonne Printemps, a more or less complete appraisal may be made on the cue of a single performance, since the talents of the actress in point are uniformly suited to and employed in a single species of drama. But to pretend fully to estimate a so variedly versatile actress as Miss Bergner, who is as apt at Shakespeare as at minor modern comedy, after observing her in a single play by Margaret Kennedy is to be, however accidentally the bull's-eye may be hit, critically suspect and a little ridiculous. Miss Bergner, as anyone who has seen her many and various preformances in Germany sufficiently knows, is a fine and flexible artist, but one may be pardoned for being skeptical of the kind of criticism which will proclaim her as such simply because it will have found her very good in a single small comedy. It will be much as if Miss Jane Cowl played her admirable Juliet in Germany and, because of that one excellent performance, was hailed by German critics as the greatest of American actresses.

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# SO YOU'RE GOING TO ENGLAND

*by HOWARD WOLF*

I HAVE never been in England. But I read nearly all the new books. So I can see England just as plain. It is a green and unpleasant land. Over it arches a rainbow with a potted gamekeeper at the foot. Across the moorlands wind parties of predatory feminine tourists from the United States, their petrol wagons adorned with banners, "We Do Our Part", and chalked with slogans, "Foot of the Rainbow or Bust!"

The fog rises promptly at 8:15 every evening and you can read the sign on the steel pier jutting out into London River. The sign says, "Taos Boats Dock Here. Cheapest Savage Pilgrimage". Englishwomen named Hon. swarm over the pier and there is some talk of writing to the *Times* about changing the name to Lorenzo River.

Towering over the city is the great dome of St. Lorenzo's cathedral where daily services are celebrated by J. Middleton Murry, better known to newspaper readers as "the gloomy dean". At intervals, one hears the famous street-cry, "'Elp! 'Elp!", and around the corner scuds a frantic gamekeeper seeking refuge in this chartered sanctuary as the shouts of "I saw him first!" draw ominously near.

Pubs dot the metropolis and the regular thumping you hear is occasioned by stout yeomen hitting the sidewalk as they are methodically chucked out by buxom barmaids averse to having coves see plumed serpents all over their places. Up every picturesque alley are hungry-looking maiden ladies engaged in hair-pulling contests, the one with the best grip screaming, "Now didn't I know Lorenzo better than you did!" as the other shrieks, "Hussy!"

On your left is the British Museum. Its Department of Printed Books was considered the largest in the world even before the addition of all the intimate volumes about D. H. Lawrence. Across the way is Lawrenceville Academy. The song ringing out is "Lorenzo Bul-Bul Amir". The huge, rambling structure down the street is the home for broken-down and worn-out gamekeepers. Changing the guard there is a twice-a-night ceremony unsurpassed for colorful pageantry in all England.

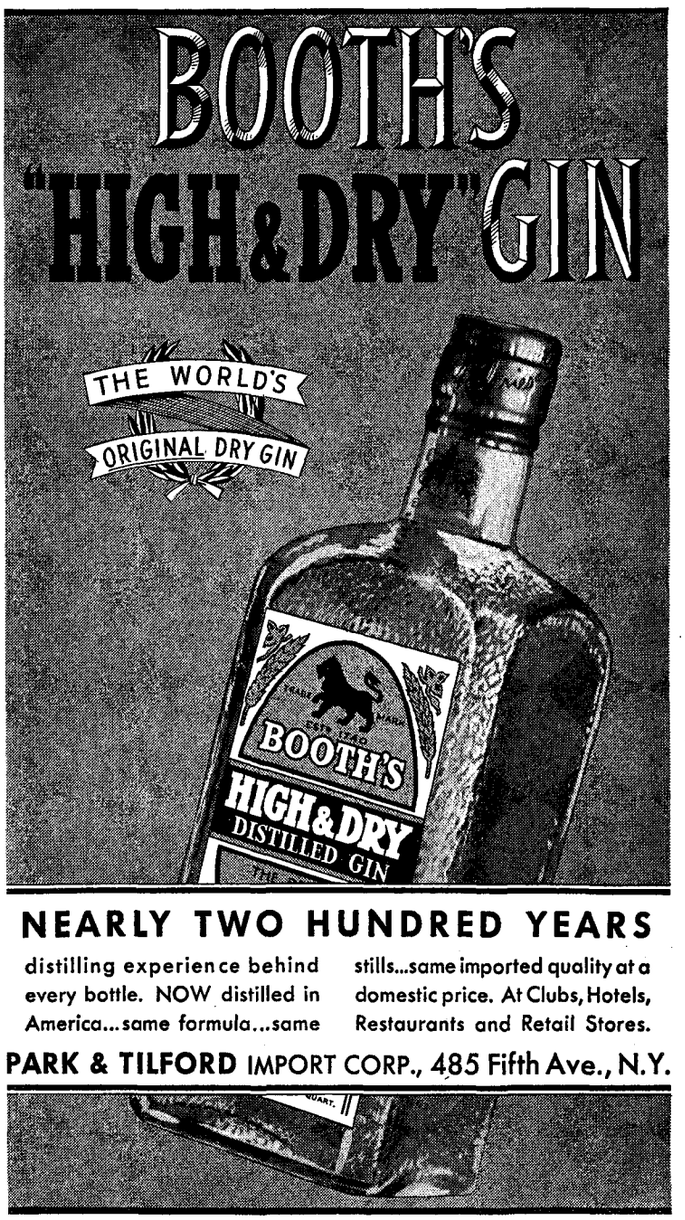
Westminster Abbey is interesting because of the south transept, formerly known as the Poets' Corner, and Westminster School because of the long standing custom of struggling for the possession of a tossed pancake on Shrove Tuesday. The Poet's Corner has been repossessed as Lorenzo's Nook and there is talk of allowing the co-eds to struggle for possession of a tossed gamekeeper come next Shrove Tuesday.

Often at the Mermaid Tavern or the Kit Kat club or the Cheshire Cheese, you will hear rising above the conversation, "So I says to the gamekeeper and he says to me and I says to him—." You won't need the guide's nudge to know that you are seeing Lady Chatterley plain. And if the clergyman backed against the wall is a new one and tries to get in a word about time having granted absolution, you'll hear her come back quick as a flash with the following good one, "But faith and I likes to talk about it." In London, D. H. Lawrence relics are for sale at 17 Gough Square, previously maintained as a shrine merely because Dr. Johnson wrote his dictionary there.

Aside from London, the chief city of England is Lorenzo-on-Avon. Comparatively few subscribe to the theory that Lawrence, operating under the nom de plume of Sir Francis Bacon, wrote the Shakespearean plays, but the discovery that the "Mr. W. H." was a misprint and that the dedication of the sonnets was to "Mr. D. H." has given this flourishing community a real place on the Lorenzo map. Not even the recent identification of the "dark woman" as Josephine Baker has occasioned such a stir in the scholarly world. "The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd" in modern dress is annually performed at the memorial theatre and Lawrence souvenirs are sold at the Ann Hathaway cottage.

Scattered about the remainder of England are thatched cottages, each the headquarters of a Lawrence League local. In the shires, gamekeeper-hunting is an extremely sporting proposition. There are few spectacles more thrilling than that presented by a red-coated great lady, attended by huntsmen and whippers-in, as she takes fence and hedge on her cob and looses a great shout of "Halloo, forward!" when the belling hounds close in on a wily gamekeeper who doubles and turns on his trail and finally, brush between his legs, makes a last desperate dash for his earth, knowing that he faces worse-than-death if the pack downs and holds him until the Hon. Vi or the Hon. Gwen comes panting up.

With the heather, justly named for Heather Angel, the cinema's little lump of cuddle, this just about completes England. The rest, as all readers of Sussex novels know, is accepted as a matter of gorse.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# NOTES FROM THE DIARY OF A TUBERCULOSIS PATIENT

*by ARTHUR DAVISON FICKE*

*(Editorial Note: The few following selections are from the private diary of a man who wrote them without any idea that they would ever be seen by anyone but himself. They were written at irregular intervals over a period of about three years. Sometimes the author put down several in the course of a week; at other times, several months would pass without his recording anything. They are reproduced without any changes. The selections begin at a time when the writer was unaware that he had any physical illness.)*

## *FIRST YEAR OF THE NOTES*

*(1)*

I DEVOTEDLY labored, during the earlier part of my life, toward two things: the acquiring of technical skill in my work, and the discovering of the great and beautiful secret that gives life its justification and meaning. I have succeeded in my first aim; now I am competent in my chosen profession. But I have found that my second aim was pure illusion. So I have no desire to stir another finger.

*(2)*

I feel impelled to record a serious fact. That is, that here in my forty-fifth year, I distrust all the wisdom of maturity. I don't know exactly why—but suddenly tonight I feel almost sure that the thing we call wisdom is a sad and ugly thing—that it is merely a hardening of the emotional arteries. Boys and girls are nice creatures—until all their natural instincts are crushed out of them.

*(3)*

Are people really sane after the age of thirty? Sometimes I doubt it. It may be that the age of twenty-five is the supreme pinnacle of human maturity—and that afterward the story is merely that of a fading flower desperately gripping its withered stem. Keats died before thirty; Coleridge rotted on toward seventy.

*(4)*

I find it hard to decide how to fill up the years between now and the time of my death. I do not want to die; if I did, I need only walk ten steps to the shelf where my old army pistol is lying. No, I enjoy certain passages of life enormously. But the flat plains of existence, the meaningless pauses, are not easy to endure; and for a person like myself, who indignantly rejects "the consolations of religion," the prospect looks rather desperate.

*(5)*

Pessimism is the only wise philosophy; but it is an awful bore for the bystanders if reiterated too often. The first man who discovered pessimism was a genius; but since we now know all about it, why go on repeating? Thomas Hardy gives me a pain. Since everybody has something wrong with him, and since the earth will be a cold globe some day, and since it may be that nothing has any existence anyway—why not search for such traces of happiness as are possible for us? Among these possibilities I would give high places to three things: conversation; lust; the construction of any work of art or science.

*(6)*

What is one to do about those restless empty hours when one wishes nothing except that the day would pass and night come on, so that one may sleep again? Why this nostalgia for a darkness that will soon enough cover us forever? It may be that death is a perfectly natural process, the desired completion of a long day, a welcome sleep. Perhaps these moods of weariness are merely the preliminary rehearsals for the grand close of the play.

*(7)*

Today I moved into my new house. What life there has in store for me I do not know. But I hope that I may be able to hear voices that I have not heard inside myself for a long time. I must keep on hoping.

## *SECOND YEAR OF THE NOTES*

*(1)*

It greatly puzzles me to find that I am in a state of mind in which nothing whatsoever in life interests me. I have no desires and no hopes; I merely wait patiently while each day passes. If I had the Wishing Ring, I would not use it; there is nothing I wish. I turn over in my mind all the possibilities of human life—and there is not one thing I would stretch out my hand to obtain. There is no one alive whose lot I envy, and I would not change places with anyone; for all other lives seem to me as meaningless and useless as my own.

*(2)*

Nowadays I read the newspapers—and am sickened by the picture of life that I see there. I look through my microscope at a drop of pond-water, and observe there the same blind, meaningless struggle for mere existence. It is hardly possible to sink to a deeper level of pessimism than I am in at present; the will to live has simply gone out of me. And yet, curiously enough, I have no intention of killing myself.

*(3)*

I do not like poetry any longer. Science merely confuses and distresses me with its evidence of the senseless predatory cruelty of nature. Religion makes me sick at my stomach with its arbitrary nonsense. Philosophy is elaborate rot. Friendship is a quicksand. Indeed, the general picture is very bad. I am not sure that I have faith in anything except lust. That, at least, has an indisputable authenticity. The rubbing together of two handsome naked human bodies produces effects of pleasure that cannot be argued away. I do not know anything else that is absolutely to be relied upon.

*(4)*

It seems fairly certain that it is in the skull that all the intricate nerve-connections of the body come to a centre, and that in the skull is the main seat of what we call consciousness. This being so, there is a wry comedy in most suicides; for why do people take poisons that attack their stomachs or their kidneys when it is the brain that they wish to destroy? I fear that many of them have long ordeals before they reach their desired end. A pistol applied to the roof of the mouth may produce results that are unaesthetic for the bystanders—but how admirably direct and successful for the chief actor!

*(5)*

This terrible depression cannot be merely spiritual. There must be some physical reason for it.

*(6)*

Last night I was looking over the records of all the work I have ever done. And damn it! I found nothing there that was absurd or ignoble, and I will stand by every particle of it. Indeed, I am rather proud of most of it. I think that, for the moment, I have almost an admiration for my past self and for my future self; it is only my present self that is so hard to endure.

*(7)*

What a shallow, pretentious ass Thoreau was! He had the effrontery to write in "Walden": "The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature,—the sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter,—such health, such cheer, they afford forever! and such sympathy they have with our race that all Nature would be affected, and the sun's brightness fade and the winds would sigh humanly, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, *if any man should ever for a just cause grieve.*" Now, can you beat that! Mrs. Eddy herself could do no worse. It makes me furious; if Thoreau were still alive, I would go to Concord and strike him in the face.

*(8)*

On days like the present one, when I feel perfectly tranquil, I am almost sure that my bad days are the result of some physical disturbance. What, I don't know.

*(9)*

*Pain* is the only thing that can make us conscious of the present moment. The rest of the time, we are thinking of the past or the future, and the present has no existence for us.

*(10)*

I think that the mainspring of my life has been the unceasing effort to increase the poise of my mind, the clarity of my view of the universe, and the reasonableness of my attitude toward my fellow-men. Considering the great difficulty of the work, and the rather badly adjusted nervous organism I have had to work with, I think I should really permit myself just one moment of satisfaction over the fact that I have not completely failed. I am far too prone, I think, to dwell on my own defects and inadequacies.

Here, in my forty-sixth year, I have no right to complain of myself. I have at length solved my economic problem, and both I and my dependents are secure. I have done lots of work, and it has met with the approval of my peers. Though I may not be the genius I once thought I was, still I am a good craftsman, and people respect me as such. I have many and warm friends; no man ever was more blessed in this regard. There is no social gathering in the world where my presence would be unwelcome, and none where I would not feel at home. It is inconceivable to me that there is any man or woman alive whose friendship I could not win if I wished. My married life is perfectly, unbelievably happy and harmonious; it has been so from the very start, almost ten years ago. I have clarified my view of the universe, and have completely accepted the fact of its vast impersonality toward me and am reconciled to my complete ignorance of it. I dread the experience of dying, for I know it must be very painful; but I have no fear whatsoever of the fact of non-existence after death.

## *THIRD YEAR OF THE NOTES*

**(1)**

An attempt to state the nature of my depression:

*(1)* I never feel well unless I have had something to drink; and perhaps I drink too much.

*(2)* Frequently I develop a hideous badness of temper which is hard to control. I begin to fancy grievances that have little or no real existence.

*(3)* Though just as sensual in nature as ever, my sexual powers are on the wane.

*(4)* I am almost wholly unable to

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work. My sense of the futility of life is so strong that I hardly dare to put it down on paper. I try not to think at all, since the only thoughts I can summon up are such black ones.

(*5*) I am disappointed by the fact that my work is not as much appreciated by the world at large as is the work of many men whose gifts I consider inferior to my own.

(*6*) I need some kind of dull routine job; I no longer have the initiative to start anything myself.

(*7*) I do not see how I can fill up the remaining years of my life. I am too old to learn a new profession; and it is obvious that there is no sense in my going on with my former futile work.

(*8*) I feel very nervous. I have an impulse to twitch my nose and lips all the time.

(*9*) I smoke constantly, though I know it is not good for me.

(*10*) I need a certain amount of admiration and flattery—yet I instantly snub anyone who attempts to give it to me. There never was anyone in the world who was nastier to his harmless "disciples" than I am.

(*11*) At times a nervous uncertainty comes over me—a feeling that my thoughts are not under very good control—that their orderly sequence might easily become completely broken, and that I might suddenly find myself standing on the brink of chaos. The agony of this feeling is quite beyond the power of anyone to imagine if he has not experienced it; it is even very hard to remember when the moment has passed.

(*12*) I fear the experience of dying. I dare not let myself think how dreadful the final moments must be.

(*13*) I greatly need some religious faith; but I consider all religions to be shocking forms of intellectual cowardice.

(*14*) The slightest opposition to my wishes makes me furious.

(*15*) I feel that all my work has been futile, and I cannot summon up the will-power again to attempt such manifestly unimportant projects.

(*16*) I hate living in the country—but I also hate living in the city.

(*17*) In a word, am I a wholly disgusting, spoiled child, aged forty-seven, who has every reason for being contented and happy, but who persists in growling to himself.

(*2*)

I am relieved and delighted, energetic and hopeful, now that I know at last that my mental depression is due to tuberculosis! Dr. G., after days of every known kind of examination, by every known kind of specialist, correlated all their findings and sent for me. He is far too intelligent a man to try to "break it to me gently"; he merely said, "Sit down. Well, you unquestionably have pulmonary tuberculosis." I said, "I knew perfectly well you were going to say that." Whether I really did know or not, I am not sure; at any rate, it was the snappiest retort I could think of at the moment. The ground was rather rocking under my feet, for in a millionth of a second I realized that the whole pattern of my life had been changed as by a stroke of lightning; and I was already trying to see what had to be done.

But when I left Dr. G.'s office, I was happy. I was happy to find that there was some reasonable explanation for what I had been through during the last few months. I can face illness and death with equanimity—but not the mere fading and weakening of my personality. To be able to see myself as having been subject to insidious physical poisons—to know that not the real "I" but the deadly bacterial secretions have been darkening my whole outlook—that knowledge lifts me up at one bound to fighting strength again.

(*3*)

Tonight I cleaned up my desk, arranged all my papers, and put all my affairs in order—a thing I have been physically unable to do for almost a year.

G. took the news just as I knew she would. She has the power to make her life—and my life—happy and beautiful, no matter what happens.

Tomorrow I leave for the sanatorium. Now I will go into the fight! And God have mercy on those bacteria—for I shall have none.

(*4*)

Now, after a week of complete rest in bed, everything looks different to me. I realize that for a long time I have been the victim of bacteria, and that it is they, not I, who must bear the blame.

A certain calm comes over one in the face of immitigable evils. The spirit draws inward to its solitary tower of rock and awaits the assault. The time is past for sending out messengers for help; there is no help. All one can do is to try to face the disaster with as much serenity as millions of men have used before.

(*5*)

Suicide is a great privilege, a thing not to be used except on due occasion; but the fact that it exists, like a court of last resort, makes life more bearable than it would otherwise be. We live because we prefer to live; the responsibility of our continuing days is our own; this gives a certain trace of heroic gleam to our darkest hours. If suicide were impossible, and there were no chance of escape from life except at the will of the gods—then the strongest will might break and the most balanced mind go wild with terror.

(*6*)

Epicurus said: "There is nothing terrible in life for the man who has truly comprehended that there is nothing terrible in not-being." This statement, with its tremendous implications, is very hard to grasp because of its brevity; but as I reflect upon it, it seems to me almost the profoundest thought ever arrived at by man.

(*7*)

Nothing on earth annoys me more than the attempt to speak in polite terms of hideous facts. When anyone says, "T. B." or "lung trouble," I want to throw up. Why not say "pulmonary tuberculosis," and to hell with euphemisms. I want things called by their names.

(*8*)

I wonder just how many people I have poisoned, in the days before I knew that I was a foul and loathsome menace to everybody I came in contact with? Thank heaven, I was never a kisser of children; I hate people who are continually slobbering over the poor little brats. But I always kissed E. M. and E. W. and R. D. and two or three other women, when I saw them, and I suppose it is just my luck to have given all of them this charming little disease.

(*9*)

E. brought L. over to see me this afternoon. Though I am confined to bed, and have twenty-four hours a day for reflection, and find life very tedious—still I do not really like to have callers. Even when dear old J. toils up the hill, in his two pairs of woolen socks, to spend an hour with me, it does not in the slightest degree alleviate the monotony of my hopelessly interminable twenty-four hours. How ungrateful I am! Three of the most brilliant and charming people on this planet come to see me—and I am so sunk in solitude that I can make no use of the riches they offer me!

If only I could get my teeth into something. If only I could jump out of bed and lead some desperate lost cause, or dash into a burning building to save a child, or in any way be something or somebody! . . . But this matter of dying slowly, like a bad apple that has a worm inside it—that is completely disgusting.

But there is nothing to do except try to make things as easy as possible for those who are still really alive.

(*10*)

I am glad that I was born, and that my life takes place in these particular years—which seem to me by far the most interesting period of recorded history. I doubt whether birth in any other country would have been more fortunate for me; and I do not think that the inheritance of greater wealth or lineage would have made me happier. I have nothing to complain of; for my only ills are those imperfections of mind and body that are common to a large proportion of mankind.

Every sincere and intelligent effort I have ever made on my own behalf has been richly rewarded; and I have received benefits from life that were pure gratuities. It would be monstrous for me to fret and fume over my ill-health, when that ill-health is attended by every circumstance of comfort, and no pain.

Granted that man is a very imperfect being, living in a universe that does not conform to his desires—still I feel that the show is a good one, and that I have been fortunate in seeing it.

# Art's Cost Sheet

*by GEORGE C. EYLAND, JR.*

Cost sheet of the Honorable Cecil B. De Mille's recent super-epic motion picture "Cleopatra":

| | |
|---|---|
| Iridescent beads | $ 9,000.00 |
| Draperies and trains | 40,000.00 |
| Whiskers | 1,000.00 |
| False Beards | 500.00 |
| Moustachios | 750.00 |
| Feathers | 150.00 |
| Feather Beds | 400.00 |
| Feather fans | 900.00 |
| Derricks | 850.00 |
| Catapults | 1,500.00 |
| Levers | 450.00 |
| Costume Jewelry (7 ton @ $1.00) | 7.00 |
| Helmets | 3,090.00 |
| German Police Dogs | 180.00 |
| Eunuchs | 0.00 |
| Jumbo Casters | 20.00 |
| Oriental Rugs | 11,000.00 |
| Egyptian Perfume | 175.00 |
| Mummies | 88.00 |
| Chandeliers | 90,000.00 |
| Candelabra | 35,000.00 |
| Instrumentæ de flagel-entum | 400.00 |
| House-broken stallions | 1,100.00 |
| Historical Research | .15 |
| Palm-bordered cesspools | 1,250.00 |
| Chains | 925.00 |
| Ionic Columns | 1,925.00 |
| Doric Pillars | 2,900.00 |
| Trumpets | 98.00 |
| Kettle Drums | 85.00 |
| Drawbridges | 3,500.00 |
| Moats | 8,250.00 |
| Continuity | .35 |
| Houri | 4,300.00 |
| Costumæ de houros | 1.90 |
| Camels | 11,000.00 |
| Histrionic versimilitude | 1.00 |
| Wine Flagons | 400.00 |
| Wine (½ pint) | .60 |
| Claustrophobic interiors | 87,000.00 |
| Dialogue | .98 |
| Sunken Gardens | 69,000.00 |
| Park Avenue Roman Repartee | 1.49 |

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# THE MUSIC NOBODY KNOWS

*by GUSTAV KLEMM*

FROM present indications the verse of the popular song seems headed for that oblivion which has already swallowed button shoes, Prohibition and the silent cinema. We doubt very much if its loss will be mourned by anyone aside from those avid students of Americana who can trace in its banalities certain interesting and revelatory patterns. For about half a century, the chorus of the popular song has had to endure the parasitic embrace of the verse, but there are gratifying evidences that this tenacious grip is weakening. It is not beyond the bounds of reason to envisage a bright future that may find the chorus of the popular song completely freed of its entangling alliance.

Nearly every one knows that the chorus of the popular song, like the music, is written first and is the only part of the song that really matters. The verse is The Music Nobody Knows. It stretches, a sort of musical No-Man's Land, between the instrumental introduction of the song and the vocal chorus. After our writers of popular songs have mauled conjointly a piano and a thesaurus until the music and words of a chorus have been manufactured, they usually spend five or, at the most, ten minutes more on turning out a verse. A song *must* have a verse. (Up until recent years, two were compulsory, but the absurdity of this carrying of coals seems eventually to have dawned on the Newcastle musical miners). The quality of the verse is of no importance; it can be unbelievably bad, a monstrosity, a disgrace. No one cares, for no one notices it. Everyone realizes in a vague sort of way that it is there and, sensing this, is satisfied.

The verse as we know it today came into its rather questionable being during the Elegant Eighties and reached its fullest development in the next decade with its plethora of waltz songs. The verse had, like the poor, always been with us, but its presence had never been an inevitable necessity of every song. Even the prolific Stephen Foster managed to do very well without it. Most of his songs, aside from an instrumental introduction, consist of nothing but a chorus; midway of the latter, there will often be a two- or four-measure (sometimes longer) extension of extraneous material that nearly always returns to the opening and main melody of the song, which then comes to a close. This old song form served Foster well, and his imitators a century ago were legion.

But the Rosies, Elsies, Annies and moribund children of the 'nineties demanded their pound of flesh from the musical body and received it in the form of the explanatory, gossipy verse. It soon developed an appalling garrulity. From eight measures, the verse spread to sixteen and then to thirty-two. A short pause here and the verse leapt on, eager to encompass even greater distances. In the verses of "The Little Lost Child", "The Fatal Wedding" and "After the Ball", outstanding successes of this period, the all-time record of sixty-four measures was reached. In these days when a verse of eight and, often, only four measures is the usual thing, one feels a welling sense of respect for those earlier and hardier singers who thought nothing of plunging bravely off the springboard of the vamp into the deep-end of a verse that went on and on and on for sixty-four measures!

About this time, the word-writers began falling into *clichés* that endured until fairly recently. No self-respecting lyricist of those days would think of finishing his verse in anticipation of the chorus waiting eagerly a short measure away without using some such stock phrase as: "And then to him (or her) did say", "He (or she) said these words so true", "She (or he) turned and softly sighed" or . . . but you probably have six or seven favorites of your own. They served as a cue to the bored listener that the long-winded verse was over and the desired chorus lay just ahead.

But these limping tag-lines eventually, and happily, came to their inevitable end. Also, the verse began to shrink. Down, down, down, it came, until today it is often a mere gesture. For years, it has been utterly valueless and serves not the slightest purpose. Writers and publishers continue to include it because of a vague feeling that there would be something slightly indecent about turning a song loose without a verse.

Closely allied to the field of popular music is that of "operetta" and musical comedy. Here there has been a growing tendency for years to shove the verse toward the grave which has been yawning expectantly for many decades. In the forefront of these more enlightened songsmiths for the stage are Jerome Kern and Franz Lehár. These men have come to realize the absurdity of the verse-fetish and, with increasing and gratifying frequency, are thumbing their nose at it. They are reverting to that simple song form which served Foster so well and so long. Lehár's "Dein ist mein ganzes Herz" from "Das Land des Lächelns" is a recent evidence of the New Day. Kern has made a number of ventures in this direction. His "The Song is You" from "Music in the Air" and "The Night is Made for Love" from "The Cat and the Fiddle" are splendid examples, while "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" from "Roberta" is his most recent experiment, a lovely one despite its rather limited lyric. Victor Herbert, the most prolific writer in this field, tampered cautiously with the idea but preferred, in the main, to stay on the established verse-chorus ground of respectability. In his earlier operettas, the inevitable waltz song had not one verse but, as it were, many verses, and followed the form of the Strauss waltzes. In the province of popular music, we recently came across a "blue" song by Lee Robin and Ralph Rainger that boldly abandoned any indication of a verse. They are to be commended; their lead, we imagine, will soon be followed by their sheep-like brethren.

As for the public, the verse has never really existed; it has treated it with the contempt of indifference. For years it has been part of my association with radio programs to give auditions to vocal aspirants. In nearly every instance, the singers have frankly stated unfamiliarity with the verse of the popular song they were prepared to sing. The fact that the song had a verse seems never to have occurred to them. They knew it was there but they failed to see the slightest reason for learning it.

In recognition of this indifference on the part of the public toward the verse of the popular song, most of the more successful dance band conductors have long since abandoned the verse in the arrangements they play. Nothing but the chorus is used; the high priests of modern orchestration, the arrangers, avoid monotony through skilful orchestration and clever modulation. Often a medley is used, consisting of nothing but the choruses of a group of popular songs. The Whitemans, Lombardos, Himbers, *et al.*, are undoubtedly driving the longest and stoutest nails into the coffin which is bearing off the verse.

As for the vamp, that weird musical device that once clung, Siamese-like, to every popular song, its demise occurred quietly and unmourned within the last few years. (Need we explain that "vamp" was the earlier name given to two or four measures of the tum-ti, tum-ti variety that just preceded the verse; some years ago "vamp" was abandoned and the limited region it once jealously guarded was labeled "Till Ready".) The vamp has been ailing for years but it hung on tenaciously, even as the dying verse of today. Go through a batch of songs issued so recently as a year ago and you will encounter numerous evidences of this relic. But peruse a sheaf of today's tunes and the vamp is conspicuous by its absence. It has folded its untuneful little tent and slipped away into the night of neglect. Rid of it, the popular song is already greatly improved; rid of its verse, the popular song will be even better.

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# THE FREE-LANCE

*by CAROL BIRD*

THERE are, in every City room, newspaper men who threaten sporadically to get out of the game in order to achieve Stability and all that that firm-jawed term represents: real money, a normal social life, regular hours. They vacillate and usually merely dream of the empyrean existence which they could live as, for example, free lance fiction writers. Occasionally a newspaper man succumbs to this urge. He is tired of having his fingers in the salmagundi of the world's happenings, and yet be able to pull out precious few plums for himself that can be translated into terms of money. So he slaves harder than ever, does extra work, takes on a few publicity campaigns, works on his days off, until he has a small capital—his grubstake for the new freedom.

Then he says good-bye to Old Bill Blunt, the police reporter, who sees frightful saurian monsters on payday; to Ann Gleason, the frowsy-haired club news writer, who drags him out to Greek lunch-rooms to eat messes of chopped sausage, garlic and green peppers, because her salary of $28 a week does not permit her to patronize first-class restaurants; and to the rest of the slaves.

What a different life he leads now! No more shifts from 7:30 in the morning, when he drifted into the City room half drugged with sleep to re-write from the morning newspapers, to 12 midnight, when he came home stupefied, after covering a night assignment, at the close of a seventeen hour grind. No. Now he sleeps until noon, gets up and sharpens pencils until about four in the afternoon, after a leisurely breakfast. Occasionally he straightens an etching on the wall, or glances through the newspapers. Everything is as quiet as a mausoleum, except for a few riveting machines, the churning of his frigidaire, and the thunder of the fat lady upstairs who does bouncing exercises on his ceiling.

He soon finds, however, that these noises are not the right kind of noises he requires for concentration. In order to create the illusion of a City room, he smokes innumerable cigarettes to fog up the atmosphere, throws out some of the furniture, and leaves only a typewriter, a table, a chair and a waste-basket, with a Murphy bed tucked up in a closet out of sight. He does not use the large and serviceable looking waste-basket, but tosses abortive literary efforts hither and yon about the room, carelessly and after the fashion of his newspaper days.

But now, although he has the stage properties of a City room, he hasn't the actors. He finds that the ogre of inertia which gets him in a strangle-hold the minute he wakes up in the morning, now that he is his own boss and can be kind to himself, requires constant vanquishing. He struggles as valiantly with the demon of apathy as an old-time revivalist battles against the devil. But each day finds him sharpening more pencils, straightening more pictures, reading newspapers, polishing his shoes—anything and everything to stave off that frightful moment when he must sit down before the typewriter and bat those steel-edged keys.

In the good old City room days the labor pains were of short duration. The spectre of press time and the dead-line ultimately started procrastinating news-gatherers pegging away at their stories. But now, even though he does eventually get down to business and grind out several columns of fiction, his working hours are comparatively short. What to do with his overtime? He misses the gang. They are either at work, or indifferent to his loneliness—and he is as lonely as a widowed lighthouse keeper—for he is no longer, in the strict sense of the word, one of them. He has gone plutocratic. He lives in an approximation to a swanky apartment house, where the doormen wear as much gold braid as admirals, vulgar garbage cans are metamorphosed into incinerator chutes, and guests have to be announced beforehand by the switchboard operator.

None of the bunch wants to call on him now. He tries to lure them after work by means of rye bread and liverwurst sandwiches and pallid coffee, in competition with the Dirty Spoon, with the added attraction that at his apartment they will not have to pay for the fare. He even throws in gastronomic titbits from a more epicurean diet for good measure: such as truffles, caviar, and pâté de foie gras sandwiches, if his fiction is selling, or he still has some of his original capital left. But it's no use.

Bill and Ann do not feel comfortable among the bond brokers and stylists for, of course, the free lance writer has made new contacts since he cut loose from the newspaper game. Besides, Bill, lurching into the royal blue lobby, reeking of wild gin and stale tobacco, and lustily singing some sea chanty, has an uncomfortable encounter with the haughty doorman once or twice and, as a result, cools on the social amenities.

So the Free Lance is thrown back on his new acquaintances, the stylists, advertising writers, real estate men, insurance company officials, that make up his social set. They play bridge, like radio concerts, and talk about their investments. No yearning here to climb that famed mountain in Thessaly. These smug ones have reached their chosen heights. And so they bid no trump, and weave no cobwebs of bright fantasy for the future. Occasionally, just to show that they have an interest in the Free Lance, his Work, and Literature in general, they turn to him and ask brightly: "Where do you get your ideas for stories? Do they just come to you? Now here's a tip that will make a fine story."

Eventually, of course, the Free Lance chucks his new work and goes back to a job on a newspaper—and stays there until his bones creak and his hair is powdered with the hoar frost of years. Then he gets shunted down some blind alley, and handles the pusillanimous job of editing real estate news, or is put in charge of the newspaper morgue. He still walks to work, while other elderly gentlemen whizz past him in their shining cars. He still eats at the Dirty Spoon, and lives in a furnished room not too far from the office. And, with his same old skill as a raconteur, he imparts to the cubs on the staff his Casanovish memoirs.

He does not always live off in a furnished room by himself. Newspaper men do marry, and this is their one habit which is often misleading to others. It causes them to believe that, after all, newspaper men are not one hundred per cent image-breakers so long as they recognize the tried and true and traditional institution of holy matrimony. They cannot be such eccentric and improvident bounders if they build their aims and efforts around a home. But this is not the reason why newspaper men marry.

Most reporters, when they are still cubs, and earning $12, $14 or $18 a week, do not live at home. They have left their homes for one reason or another, most of them mentioned before. They rebel at stern discipline, enforced church attendance, too many inhibitions, too much lack of imagination on the part of members of their families. Many of them cut loose and leave home, but those who do and those who do not, young or old, while loving their freedom, their ability to express themselves and to live uninhibited lives, still yearn for some of the very real comforts of home. Eventually their digestive apparatus whines for home-cooked meals, the men themselves yearn for sympathetic feminine companionship—some one with whom to spend the day off. So they marry the woman reporter, who is also an image-breaker, who is able to see the droll humor in a Rabelaisian yarn, and who has read "'Ulysses"; or the office switchboard operator, who is accustomed to irregular hours; or the hotel manicurist, who never knew a sheltered home and who certainly doesn't want to establish one.

But to return to the theorem that newspaper men enter the newspaper field as youths because of their families. How and

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where do they discover that newspaper reporting is the one field where they will find Utopia, and escape from Traditions, Conventions, Monotony, Boredom? Where they can let off steam, prick bright bubbles to their hearts' content, in short, be themselves. Ordinarily they find this out from other newspaper men. Like the navy recruit who is told that he will see the world when he enlists, the iconoclastic chap who has not yet found his niche, and who is wondering disconsolately where he fits in in life, stumbles across a full-fledged reporter who introduces him to the glorious freedom of newspaper life.

The boy who is fed up on his spic and span home, his nagging parents, ministers' calls, hymn singing, sombre prohibition talk, moralizing, slogans, proverbs, and the thunderous normalcy of all his folks, goes wild with joy when he gets his first glimpse of a crazy newspaper office, listens to the rowdy banter of the seasoned members of the staff, observes the absence of a time-clock, and notices the tolerant way every one treats old Jonesy, the office drunk. His heart pounds when he hears the fire gong sounding in the office, skips a beat or two as he stands beside the telegraph instruments listening to the world's news coming over the wire, and turns a somersault when he learns that his friend, who introduced him to this fascinating world, has got to cover the big Bluebeard Logan murder and will take him along.

So he becomes a newspaper man. And waxes pseudo-cynical with the passing of the years, develops a paunch, eats too much after thirty, takes bicarbonate of soda, and generally grows old after the fashion of all of us. But with this one exception: he never becomes a standardized human creature. He differs from the multitude. He breaks images to his dying day. Doubtless, if he could, he would destroy them after death, and raise strenuous objections to wearing the conventional shroud. He would insist on going to his long sleep comfortably in his old velour hat, his ankle-hugging garters, and his dizzy tie.

# THE RADIO DRAMA

*by LEWIS HERMAN*

RECENTLY, in a newspaper article, a radio columnist bewailed the state of the drama in radio. He pleaded with the playwrights of the legitimate theatre to turn their talents to writing for the mike and so raise the level of the radio drama to approximately that of the stage. He couldn't quite understand why the better writers had not been writing for the radio.

The fact is that certain better American writers have been approached. Booth Tarkington has produced a series of continued radio skits. T. S. Stribling recently completed a script. Several other literary figures have contributed their talents. Yet the radio drama continues to cater to the eight-year-old I.Qs.

Of course, the really big shots have not thus far been attracted to the radio. They haven't felt willing to write a play that was to be performed only once, for which they would receive a sum of money scarcely commensurate with the amount they would get were they to spend the same time on a Broadway production. The average play takes a playwright about half a year to write. In manuscript it runs to something over one hundred pages, double-spaced, the playing time for which would be about two hours. At that rate, a half-hour radio drama would take the average playwright at least one-fourth of the time it would take him to write a three-act play, or about forty-five days. For the manuscript, under the present scheme, he would be paid between $500 and $1000, the exact amount depending on his eminence as a dramatist. When one considers that moving picture rights alone bring a successful dramatist sums ranging between $25,000 and $75,000, it should be apparent why this same playwright has refused to become an altruist.

Who are the people writing for the radio at the present time? The current radio drama is being written either by a member of the script-writing staff employed by the radio chains and the advertising agencies or by an independent free-lance. Little free-lance work is accepted, so this factor is negligible. In the case of the staff writer, most of his time is taken up with the ordinary routine filler. Occasionally he is asked to furnish a regular program-length play to run about twenty minutes, the rest of the half-hour being taken up with inserts of commercial matter known as "plugs". He is paid by the week and not by the piece or the quality of his work. Therefore, he has no desire to improve himself. He sees to it only that his work is good enough for him to keep his job. There is no incentive for anything else. What is more, the writing of the play must be hurried. After all, the writer is paid not to produce one show, but to write the continuity and chatter and descriptive blurbs for a number of them. Speed is the desideratum.

Another basic reason for the low quality of radio plays is that there is no open market for them. In the magazine field, a new writer can succeed financially if he shows the necessary ability. The same cannot be said about radio. If the writer is young and female and good-looking, she can perhaps sell herself, in more ways than one. But the picture is decidedly different if the new writer happens to be an ordinary male. His work is given a hasty perusal that seldom goes past the first page and is returned with the usual hackneyed phrase of rejection. If he knows the second cousin of the secretary of the vice-president of an advertising agency that handles radio accounts, he may conceivably be accorded the opportunity of submitting a script for a proposed program. He becomes a free-lance and, if he gets to know the higher-ups in a radio chain, he has a good chance of being taken into the holy circle of staff writers. But if he knows nobody, if he tries to break into radio with only the ability to create ideas and radio dialogue, he stands as much chance of earning a living as would a White Russian in the Soviets.

The lack of competent criticism is another factor in the plight of the radio drama. The only radio criticism being done in this country is in the form of columnists' gossip about radio stars, none of which is true. Radio editors of the newspapers tell only of the doings of this or that radio star or program, the information being fabricated and furnished to them either by regular publicity bureaus of the radio chains or by hired press-agents.

The first radio play to be published was "Sue 'Em," by N. B. Brosius, which won a prize back in 1925. If a current radio script were to be compared with this forerunner of the craft, there would be little change noticeable. Perhaps the naïve stage directions would be deleted. But that would be all.


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